

Questions for State Representative Candidates

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What do you think are the 3 biggest issues Maine faces over the next four years?

1. Restructuring state government services
2. Transportation infrastructure
3. Tax reform

How will you represent *all Portlanders*, including the traditionally marginalized members of our community (for example, the homeless, the poor, those with mental or physical disabilities)?

My record as a public safety executive has demonstrated a consistent commitment to supporting the needs and concerns of communities and individuals who have been pushed aside by the power of ignorance.

My hope is that the Legislature will continue to exercise the necessary leadership that will promote and sustain basic human rights for everyone.

How will you deal with the budget shortfall? Augusta has been committed to only dealing with one side of the budget, by cutting expenses. Are you open to raising revenues? If so, in what ways?

In spite of recent legislative efforts involving cost shifting and or consolidation efforts, core fixed costs for services have and will continue to rise.

Seeking realistic efficiencies and not simply general across the board cuts reflect half an answer to our budget problem. We may also have to consider selective increases in revenue to help balance citizen expectations surrounding essential services..

There has been persistent uncertainty regarding federal subsidies for Rail in Maine (specifically the Downeaster). Are you committed to Maine's Amtrak link? How would the state make up any short fall in federal funding for Amtrak?

I do not believe that the state is financially positioned to provide any direct subsidy to what is largely a federal initiative.

The state has and should continue to play a leadership role in facilitating the development and use of intermodal transportation systems.

However, key business decisions surrounding the operational viability or risks arising from an interstate transportation venture should be questions for discussion within the private sector.

Do you support same-sex marriage? (please answer yes or no) If yes, what will you do to further the cause? If no, why do you oppose same-sex marriage?

Yes. The right to marry is a basic human right. To paraphrase Dr. King, law can change minds but true equality comes from a change in heart. Whatever I can do to help further the cause, I will do.

What policies do you believe need to be enacted to support Maine's growing immigrant and refugee population?

We need to do what we can to assist families who live in a bicultural context. There should be a continued focus on ESL (English as a second language) programming to insure a capacity for new residents to effectively communicate with their neighbors and potential employers.

We should actively solicit the partnership of the community college system and local business leaders in creating a unified approach to immigrant assimilation.

There should also be a commitment among state and municipal school leaders to promote educational equity for immigrant youth in our school systems so that they can truly access their individual potential as students.

Efforts should also be expended on securing federal funds to create opportunities for public safety services to engage and eventually assimilate immigrant youth into their organizations so that these departments begin to reflect the communities they serve.

How can the government of Maine keep our youth from leaving and attract new youth to the State?

My two daughters are twenty somethings. Both left the state to find work. One has returned but is now considering leaving again because of the economic environment. I am very disappointed by the reality they and their friends face..

The energy, ideas and spirit that I see in that generation may well be the true untapped resource of this state. We must do better to help them become the engine of success for Maine.

I would propose the following:

First keep post secondary school affordable. Post graduation loan payments can be crushing when you are trying to set up an independent life.

Second, establish a micro-loan program for youth entrepreneurs so they can create jobs just not look for one.

Third, create a 21st century homesteading initiative that will assist young people in securing home ownership so they can have a tangible stake in our communities. We must be open to new ideas that would include not only single household units but adopts co-ops, collectives (shared common spaces) and mixed use (residential/work) designs as key possibilities in revitalizing our cities and towns.

How would you improve access to healthcare in Maine? What steps would you take to improve Dirigo Health? Do you support single payer healthcare?

As Sheriff, I witnessed our jail based health care budget grow from 634 thousand dollars a year to well over three million dollars per budget cycle. Our health care "system" became the default acute care resource serving both Maine Care and uninsured populations. Cost growth was propelled, in large part, by a patient demographic notable for medical histories that reflected high risk social behavior and or chronic disease.

The key lesson, from our experience, was a recognition that financial systems and evidence based care plans were no match for lifestyle decisions that guaranteed high end expenditures.

I firmly believe that any successful health care model must redouble current efforts in the health promotion arena.

Dirigo Health must stand not only for insurance access but must represent a focused public health strategy that will make populations less vulnerable to diseases from the onset.

Single payer insurance makes sense but it must be coupled to an equally vigorous health promotion agenda.